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Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 153: Human resources management (*continued*) (A/52/814)

1. **Mr. Paschke** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the audit of the use of consultants (A/52/814), said that completion of the audit and preparation of the report had been delayed by problems in the collection of data and reconciliation of the information received from various offices.

2. The major recurring problems detailed in the report concerned the selection and remuneration of consultants; administrative procedures needed to be improved and related internal controls strengthened in order to ensure that consultants were hired in an objective, transparent manner and that the fees paid to them were reasonable bearing in mind the work involved and the expertise required. To that end, OIOS had recommended the development of computerized rosters as part of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) and of realistic consultant remuneration scales, taking into account the market rates for different categories of consultants at each duty station.

3. The report mentioned cases of geographical imbalance in 1996 in which a small group of countries had accounted for up to 67 per cent of the consultants hired, but for the most part those consultants were nationals of the country where they were hired, a practice which resulted in considerable savings. Owing to problems in data collection, the figures for hiring and payment of consultants were merely estimates; however, that situation should be rectified by the introduction of corrective measures by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM). In response to a concern expressed by the General Assembly, OIOS had attempted to determine whether consultants were being engaged for functions previously performed by United Nations staff. Although it had found no clear evidence to that effect, the record-keeping problems noted during the audit had made it impossible to rule out the possibility.

4. The report had been prepared after extensive discussion with officials of the Secretariat and, in particular, of OHRM, who had concurred with the OIOS findings. Some of the recommendations included in the report had been implemented and others would be dealt with by the Secretary-General's Task Force on Human Resources Management.

5. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) said that his delegation concurred with most of the recommendations made in the report and that some of them, including those which concerned changes to the IMIS system, could be implemented immediately. He was deeply concerned by the data-related shortcomings which had delayed completion of the audit and preparation of the report. The use of consultants was common to all United Nations organizations and deserved to be considered within the broader perspective of personnel policy. In view of the fact that the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was also preparing a report on the use of experts and consultants, he suggested that the Committee should consider the OIOS and JIU reports together at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, a procedure which had worked well in the case of the discussion of the two reports on procurement reform.

6. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation fully supported the recommendations contained in the report and urged the Secretariat to remedy all the problems mentioned therein, particularly with regard to geographical balance, the need for revised control figures and the establishment of revised guidelines which would include a new term, "institutional or corporate consultants".

Agenda item 137: Financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994 (*continued*) (A/52/784)

7. **Mr. Paschke** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the 1997 audit and investigation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (A/52/784), said that substantial change had taken place at the Tribunal since the 1996 review. A new spirit of cooperation between the Registry and other organs of the Tribunal had enhanced the Registry's role as service provider. The Tribunal now received support from United Nations Headquarters, in particular, the Department of Management and the Office of Legal Affairs. Reorganization of the Office of the Prosecutor under the new Deputy Prosecutor had led to improved operations and new indictments; the Registry's financial reporting, cash management, recruitment and personnel administration and overall management had improved; and additional facilities were in operation or under construction.

8. However, much remained to be done. The number of vacancies in the Registry and the Office of the Prosecutor remained high, but those posts must be filled through standard recruitment procedures. There was a need to establish stricter control over the use of vehicles, ensure compliance with United Nations procurement procedures, establish a credible witness protection programme and improve security, particularly for judges, at both Arusha and Kigali. The report also identified three new areas of concern: the need for a clear policy on procedural guidelines for use of the Tribunal's Trust Fund, guidelines for determining whether defence counsel fees were reasonable and necessary and strengthening of the Tribunal's press and public affairs unit in order to achieve media coverage commensurate with the importance of the trials.

9. Nevertheless, OIOS noted with appreciation the overall improvement since the previous review. It was, therefore, surprising that the Registrar, unlike all other parties involved, had questioned the objectivity and professionalism of the follow-up review. The report, like all other OIOS reviews, had been carried out in accordance with professional standards and, as to the question of objectivity, OIOS reported on significant issues, not on a political basis but wherever they arose.

10. **Mr. Gjesdal** (Norway) said that it was unfortunate that administrative and other difficulties had given rise to doubts concerning the Tribunal's ability to carry out its mandate. While his delegation welcomed the progress in implementation of the recommendations made in the 1997 OIOS report (A/51/789), it remained concerned at the substantial shortcomings in the areas of procurement, recruitment, personnel, witness protection, asset management, Trust Fund operations, defence counsel management and press and public affairs. His Government had full confidence in OIOS and considered it essential that the remedial action which it had proposed, and the measures endorsed by the General Assembly, should be fully addressed by the Registrar without delay. His Government also hoped that the Security Council would increase the number of judges on the Tribunal in order to avoid problems at the Trial Chamber level and further delays in the administration of justice.

11. **Mr. Thorne** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia, and, in addition, Liechtenstein, said that he welcomed the follow-up report and was pleased that many of the recommendations made in the 1997 report had been implemented. However, despite the request of the General Assembly, many of the recommendations made in the earlier report had not been implemented at the time of the second inspection period. He was dismayed at the numerous financial and administrative irregularities and attached great importance to the Tribunal's strict compliance with United Nations rules and regulations.

12. New recruitment was needed in order to compensate for the phasing out of gratis personnel and ensure the effective functioning of the Tribunal. He therefore regretted the slowness of recruitment procedures, particularly in view of the fact that the Tribunal had received the necessary funding, and the disparities in expertise and qualification between officials recruited at the same level. It was also important to establish an effective witness protection programme, protect the judges of the Tribunal, establish guidelines for payment of defence counsel fees and develop a code of conduct for defence counsel. While the European Union had initially been disturbed by the comments of OIOS concerning the Trust Fund (A/52/784, para. 79), more recent figures supplied by the Secretariat showed greatly increased use. He hoped that all expenditures were in conformity with the approved purposes of the Fund and noted that the Registrar had undertaken to establish a regulatory framework.

13. The Tribunal needed an effective infrastructure and administration in order to properly carry out its functions, and the improvement already under way was an excellent example of the value of effective oversight in the United Nations system and, in particular, of giving priority to continuous supervision of newly established bodies such as the Tribunals.

14. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) noted that four of the recommendations contained in the 1997 report had not been implemented and that only six had been implemented in full. Although his Government considered that the Security Council had exceeded its mandate by establishing the special tribunals, it was the Government's policy not to place any conditions on payment of its contributions to established bodies. Good management and resource administration resulted in savings for Member States and an improved image of the Organization, whereas failure to implement United Nations recommendations was more costly for all parties concerned. He welcomed the improved relationship between the Registry, the Chambers and the Office of the Prosecutor and supported the recommendations contained in the follow-up report and, in particular, in paragraphs 111-113. It was to be hoped that all OIOS recommendations would be implemented before the next follow-up report was issued.

15. **Mr. Watanabe** (Japan) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Tribunal's work but considered that the 37 per cent increase in its budget for 1998 must be accompanied by a corresponding increase in transparency and accountability. In that regard, the OIOS report was particularly useful since the distance between Arusha or Kigali and New York made it difficult for delegations to keep abreast of the Tribunal's activities. The inclusion in the follow-up report of comments by the Prosecutor, Registrar and other officials made it more balanced than the 1997 report.

16. With regard to the OIOS recommendations, it was important for qualified staff to be recruited as quickly as possible and appropriate action taken with regard to the officials mentioned in paragraphs 110-113. As to facilities, he suggested that the Tribunal might share space with other United Nations bodies with a view to increased security and efficiency.

17. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) noted with appreciation that the Tribunal had implemented, in whole or in part, 22 of the 26 recommendations contained in the 1997 report and hoped that it would take steps to address the ongoing and new problems identified in the follow-up report on a priority basis. He hoped that the inclusion of observations by the relevant officials and OIOS comments thereon, which enhanced the credibility and transparency of the follow-up report and were evidence of the consultative process that had led to its preparation, would continue in future reports. In particular, his delegation had noted the lack of control procedures governing expenditures from the Trust Fund, the plan to use the Fund to finance partially, against the advice of all parties concerned, a new programme which would provide funds to non-governmental organizations that assisted victims of war crimes, the issues raised in paragraphs 81-86 concerning defence counsel management, the lack of procurement planning, sole-source purchases of office supplies and splitting of purchase orders in order to avoid approval by the Local Committee on Contracts, the investment of considerable financial and human resources in the old UNIX system without the Controller's authorization, employment of staff without contracts and hiring without vacancy announcements, misuse of vehicles and lack of discipline in observing office hours.

18. Although OIOS had supported the Prosecutor's view that gratis personnel could be used until the vacancy rate fell to an acceptable level or until the end of 1998, his delegation considered that General Assembly resolution 51/243 required the expeditious phase out of gratis personnel and that only those whose services were essential to cases already under way could be retained until the end of the current calendar year. He also requested information on the status of the recommendation made in paragraph 110 from the point of view of General Assembly resolution 48/218.

19. **Mr. Mihut** (Romania) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

20. **Mr. Jaremczuk** (Poland) said that his delegation, too, agreed with the views of the European Union.

21. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said that his country had closely followed the progress of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and was pleased to note that most of the recommendations formulated by OIOS in its February 1997 report on the audit and investigation of the Tribunal (A/51/789) had been put into effect by the Tribunal itself. If, however, the Department of Management and the Office of Legal Affairs had provided sustained assistance to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, many problems might have been avoided; such assistance should be provided in order to avoid the resurgence of similar problems in future. Disturbingly, the follow-up report (A/52/784) showed that problems with IMIS continued to have a significant adverse impact on the functioning of United Nations bodies. It also indicated, in paragraph 17, that despite the recommendation of OIOS to discontinue a staff member's contract, it had been renewed; clarification would be welcome.

22. **Mr. Wharton** (United States of America) said his delegation fully supported the work of both the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The report of OIOS on the follow-up to the 1997 audit and investigation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was encouraging; the United States commended the Tribunal for the improvements in nearly every area surveyed. Significantly, the new Registrar and the new Chief of Administration had reported that they were taking corrective action in those areas where there were still difficulties. Further action was required in establishing procedures for defence counsel, adopting a code of conduct for defence counsel, devising procedures for handling and transporting cash, preventing circumvention of recruitment standards, taking administrative action against delinquent staff members and establishing guidelines for the operation of the Trust Fund. Finally, his delegation was pleased that the Department of Management and the Office of Legal Affairs were providing greater assistance to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and looked forward to continued monitoring of the Tribunal's work.

23. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said his delegation supported the views expressed by Algeria.

24. **Mr. Paschke** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that the question raised by the representative of Pakistan with regard to paragraph 110 of the report fell more properly to the Department of Management.

Agenda item 114: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/52/776 and A/52/777)

25. **Mr. Hummeny** (Ukraine) commended OIOS for the high quality of its reports. The report on the review of programme management in the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division (A/52/777) was, however, distressing: inspections had shown that the Division lacked a clear focus and strategy, that the monitoring and coordination system was inadequate, and that upper levels of management provided insufficient guidance and oversight. Resources had been spread thin and used inefficiently. Those problems were related to the quality of the staff, who were unequipped to cope with the evolving realities of organized crime and its consequences, and resulted from a recruitment policy which chose to advance the careers of existing personnel rather than to use the services of experts.

26. He welcomed the endorsement by Executive Heads of the OIOS recommendations in its reports on the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division and on the audits of the regional commissions, and looked forward to their prompt implementation.

27. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) noted that the OIOS report on the audits of the regional commissions pointed out that ECLAC had reoriented its programme activities, and that its expenditures had therefore not corresponded to its proposed programme budget; her delegation hoped that such departures would not be revealed in the audit for 1998-1999. Remarkably, 73 per cent of the proposed programme budget had been turned to uses other than those planned. The question arose of how such budgetary diversions affected planned activities and whether ECLAC commonly managed its budgetary affairs in that manner.

28. The report also indicated that ECLAC had provided administrative support to the Regional Office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Mexico without any formal agreement defining the terms and conditions of that arrangement; Cuba commended ECLAC and UNEP for having undertaken a joint reassessment of administrative support arrangements, and supported the plan to conclude an inter-agency support agreement.

29. In its report on the review of programme management in the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division, OIOS presented some interesting recommendations in the areas of administration and management. It also, however, encouraged the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to continue its efforts to impose self-restraint in the enactment of new mandates and to reorient the activities of its secretariat so as to expand its role only in areas where it had a comparative advantage. Such recommendations were outside the scope of OIOS.

30. The report revealed that the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division was evaluating the periodicity of documentation, and recommended that the volume of parliamentary documentation might be reduced by subsuming in one document issues currently covered by several; such decisions should fall to the Commission and to the Member States.

31. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) said her Government attached great importance to the matter of crime prevention. Since the OIOS review had been conducted before the creation of the new Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, which would manage conjointly the Centre for International Crime Prevention and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the report had not evaluated the impact of the consolidation on management. The question thus arose of whether the recommendations contained in the report would apply to the new structure.

32. Documentation was an essential substantive responsibility of the Secretariat, and should not be viewed as a diversion of resources. Her Government was deeply grateful to the secretariat of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division for the parliamentary services it provided.

33. The Philippines also supported the provision of technical assistance, including training and advisory services, to Governments in their efforts to combat international crime. In accordance with the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime, regional meetings had been held around the world, at the ministerial level. Such efforts should advance the fight against transnational crime.

34. **Mr. Thorne** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the report on the audits of the regional commissions indicated that earlier recommendations had been implemented; he expected that the remaining ones would also be addressed. The European Union attached great importance to crime prevention; it was worth recalling that the Committee for Programme and

Coordination (CPC), at its thirty-eighth session, would be closely studying the crime prevention programme. That might serve as an opportunity to assess the report in more detail.

35. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said his Government attached considerable importance to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division. The boundary between management and programme content was a narrow one; OIOS should take care not to overstep its mandate. All matters involving documentation, which included content, editorial policy and publication schedule, fell not to OIOS but to Member States.

36. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said his Government also ascribed great importance to crime prevention, and supported, in particular, assistance for regional efforts to combat crime. The report on the audits of the regional commissions indicated that the ECA accounting system was not functioning successfully, a failure which could be attributed to IMIS; for example, bank reconciliations had fallen behind. Strong punitive action should be taken against the staff member who was presumed to have fraudulently endorsed checks. His delegation looked forward with interest to the findings of the relevant investigation. He hoped that shortcomings in the areas of accounts receivable would promptly be redressed, in particular since the problem seemed to have been caused by an outdated computer system and a lack of adequate staff.

37. Uganda was distressed that the United Nations Conference Centre at Addis Ababa was understaffed: the programme budget had provided for two engineers at the Professional level and three General Service staff; as of the date of the audit, only the General Service posts had been filled. Attention must also be paid to increasing security at the Conference Centre.

38. **Mr. Bond** (United States of America) said his Government hoped that the recommendations in the two OIOS reports would be implemented in a timely manner. The report on the audits of the regional commissions indicated that a substantial portion of the resources used by ECLAC Mexico had gone towards unapproved activities. He was curious to know how such a situation had risen, and who, for instance, had instructed staff to carry out unauthorized projects.

39. **Mr. Paschke** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), replying to the question put by the United States on the high proportion of outputs not included in the programme budget, said that in the view of OIOS, budget planning could be more realistic, and work carried out should adhere more closely to plan. Replying to concerns raised by Cuba, he said that ECLAC and the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts were currently discussing the ECLAC subregional programme of work; an inter-agency agreement had been concluded between ECLAC and UNEP in October 1997.

40. Regarding programme management in the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division, OIOS reports were addressed to management, but were also written for the Commission. In effect, OIOS was asking the two of them to participate in a dialogue. OIOS had determined that there were an excessive number of mandates, so that secretariat resources were spread too thin, and had recommended that the Commission and the secretariat together should evaluate the number of mandates against the availability of resources and conduct a critical assessment of current and future needs. In fact, dialogue regarding the work of the secretariat and documentation had already begun. Decisions concerning documents would naturally be made by the Commission.

41. Responding to the observations of the representative of the Philippines, he wished to stress that in carrying out its inspections OIOS had been highly impressed by the skill and dedication of staff, particularly those who serviced the various legislative bodies. He nevertheless called upon the secretariat and the legislative bodies to examine together ways in which performance could be further enhanced. The forthcoming session of CPC would provide a useful opportunity to further explore those issues.

42. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that it was important to draw a distinction between programme and administrative processes. Caution must be exercised when making recommendations pertaining to mandates, the volume of documentation and other matters in which there was a danger of crossing the boundary between the prerogatives of intergovernmental legislative bodies and those of management.

43. **Ms. Archini De Giovanni** (Italy) expressed satisfaction at the comments of the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services regarding the dedication of staff. In the current climate of severe financial constraints, the success of the Organization's endeavours depended on the skill and dedication of its staff.

44. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked whether the report of OIOS would be taken up by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at its April session in Vienna.

45. **Mr. Paschke** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services) said that the report would be considered by the Commission.

Agenda item 117: Improving the financial situation of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/52/444)

46. **Mr. Watanabe** (Japan) said that he wished to correct the erroneous impression that had been given at the Committee's 48th meeting by the representative of the United States. In his statement under agenda item 117, the representative of the largest contributor had claimed that the partial payment which his Government proposed to make in March 1998 would be larger than the contribution of the next largest contributor for the entire year. That statement was incorrect. In 1997, Japan had paid a total amount of $313 million in contributions to the regular budget and to the various international tribunals and peacekeeping operations. That amount was more than twice that which the United States had promised to pay in the near future. Instead of comparing its "payment-to-be-made in the future" with the amount already paid by the second largest contributor, the largest contributor should fulfil its obligations under the Charter and pay its arrears of $1.3 billion immediately.

Other matters

47. **Mr. Monayair** (Kuwait) said that the General Assembly, in its resolution 52/214 on the pattern of conferences, had decided that the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha should be observed as official holidays of the United Nations, that no United Nations meetings should be held, and that United Nations buildings should be closed to the public on those days. He thanked the Office of Human Resources Management for the part it had played in implementing the resolution with regard to Id al-Fitr. However, he was concerned that the resolution had not been fully implemented with regard to Id al-Adha, which would fall on 7 April 1998. He said that the resolution had been adopted after extensive consultations in the Fifth Committee and the Group of 77 and China, and the fact that it was not being fully implemented was a cause of great concern to many Islamic countries. He sought a response on that issue.

48. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation sought an urgent explanation from the Office of Human Resources Management as to why the General Assembly's decision that henceforth the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha should be observed as official holidays of the United Nations at Headquarters and at other duty stations where applicable had not been fully implemented. He noted that, while Id al-Fitr had been made an official holiday, Id al-Adha had been placed on a list of optional holidays. Assembly resolution 52/214 A made no such distinction between the two holidays.

49. He would also welcome an explanation of why the staff representatives had issued a calendar in early January that showed both holidays as optional, thereby causing confusion among the staff. The General Assembly was the Organization's legislative body and its resolutions must therefore be fully implemented.

50. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) reiterated her delegation's previous requests for a conference room paper to be prepared on General Assembly resolutions 52/220 and 52/221 on the subject of posts. She also sought information on the date when final authorization had been given to departments to begin the process of recruitment to fill the posts approved under the regular budget. It would also be helpful if the relevant administrative instruction could be made available to the Committee.

51. **Mr. Medina** (Morocco) thanked the Secretary-General for implementing the General Assembly's decision regarding Id al-Fitr, but was also concerned about the delay in the implementation of the provisions regarding Id al-Adha. He noted that the Staff Union had polled the staff in connection with the application of the Assembly's resolution. In his view, the implementation of General Assembly resolutions was a matter for the Secretariat and not for any other body.

52. **Mr. Elmontasser** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation supported the statements made by the representatives of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. He affirmed the importance of implementing General Assembly resolution 52/214 with regard to the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha, and said that no consideration should be given to interpretations of the resolution which detracted in any way from its implementation.

53. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) said that he shared the views expressed by the representatives of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Morocco on the subject of the implementation of Assembly resolution 52/214 A.

54. **Mr. Sulaiman** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported the statements made by the two previous speakers on the subject of the two holidays of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha.

55. **The Chairman** reiterated his request that the Secretariat should respond by the following day to the questions of delegations regarding documentation. He had transmitted the representative of Cuba's request for information to the relevant substantive department of the Secretariat and would take up the matter with it again.

56. On the subject of the Muslim holidays, General Assembly resolution 52/214 A contained three relevant provisions: that no meetings should be held on Id al-Fitr and

Id al-Adha, that United Nations buildings at Headquarters and at other duty stations where applicable should be closed to the public on those days, and that the two holidays should henceforth be observed as official holidays of the United Nations. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management had taken prompt action to implement the first two provisions. The first part of the third provision had also been implemented with the declaration of Id al-Fitr as an official holiday. The Assistant Secretary-General was actively considering ways of implementing the second part of the decision with respect to Id al-Adha. A major constraint, however, was the General Assembly's earlier decision to limit the number of official holidays in each calendar year to nine. He was confident, however, that a solution to the problem would shortly be found.

57. **Ms. Emerson** (Portugal) said that it might be useful for the results of the poll conducted by the Staff Union on the question of official holidays to be made available to the Committee.

58. **Ms. Achouri** (Tunisia), supported by Mr. Ahounou (Côte d'Ivoire) and Mr. Hanson (Canada), noted that, unlike the English versions, press releases in French on the Committee's meetings were not always immediately available on the Internet. It was important that equal treatment should be given to the Organization's two working languages. Even more serious was the frequent failure of the French press releases to accurately reflect the statements of delegations. Press releases were an important source of information for many delegations and she hoped that prompt action would be taken to correct the situation.

59. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that he supported the comments made by the delegation of Tunisia. His delegation had found the press releases to be a useful source of information and hoped that the service concerned would be able to maintain the high standard of work which it had produced in the past.

60. On the question of the Muslim holidays, he wished to know whether it was the General Assembly or the staff that made decisions on such matters.

61. **Mr. Darwish** (Egypt) said the Egyptian delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Tunisia on the accuracy of press releases. His delegation had noted the lack of balance in the reports of representatives' statements. Sometimes the summary was one page or half a page, and sometimes it was one line.

62. **The Chairman** said it was the General Assembly that decided such matters as official holidays. The question of the reliability of press releases was a valid one. Some time previously, he had himself raised the issue with the head of the Department of Public Information and had been told that press releases were not official documents, but for the information of the media. Even so, he himself was of the view that they should accurately represent the views of delegations. He had also been reminded about the severe staff constraints under which the Department operated and of the "techno-political" nature of the Committee's discussions, which often made them difficult to summarize. He nevertheless believed that press releases should preserve the balance of the statements made in meetings and bring out the essence of the deliberations. If in doubt, press officers should consult with speakers. He would convey the Committee's views to the Office of Communications and Public Information (OCPI).

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.